

Message Text

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ACTION AID-31

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 IGA-02 EB-07 L-03 SP-02 /056 W
-----007342 111605Z /43

P R 111440Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5694
INFO AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 FREETOWN 2130

SECSTATE ALSO FOR AID

MONROVIA ALSO FOR AID

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID
SUBJ: OICI

REF: FREETOWN 2119

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: OICI DIRECTOR BOYER AND I MET WITH MINISTER OF EDUCATION KOROMA FRIDAY AFTERNOON, JULY 8, AND MAY HAVE SATISFIED STEVENS' CONCERNS ABOUT OICI ACTIVITIES. HOWEVER, FROM THE QUESTIONS KOROMA ASKED THE SUSPICION IS RAISED THAT SOMEONE WITH ACCESS TO AN OVERVIEW OF OICI'S ACTIVITIES ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA MAY BE ATTEMPTING TO SOW DOUBTS AND MISTRUST ABOUT OICI IN STEVENS' MIND. END SUMMARY.

2. OICI DIRECTOR HERBERT BOYER AND I MET FOR ALMOST TWO HOURS WITH EDUCATION MINISTER ABDUL KOROMA AND HIS PERMANENT SECRETARY E.K.A. KING. KOROMA, WHO APPEARED TOTALLY UNFAMILIAR WITH OICI'S ACTIVITIES DURING THE MORNING SESSION WITH THE PRESIDENT, HAD BEEN BRIEFED FULLY IN THE INTERIM. I TOLD KOROMA THAT BOYER HAD AGREED TO FIRE THE TWO MEN THE PRESIDENT FOUND UNACCEPTABLE AND TO DISSOLVE HIS BOARD OF DIRECTORS.
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I ALSO EXPLAINED THAT OICI'S PROBLEMS STEMMED FROM IGNORANCE OF LOCAL CONDITIONS AND NOT FROM ANY MALICE AND ASKED KOROMA TO APPOINT A KNOWLEDGEABLE MEMBER OF HIS STAFF TO WORK DIRECTLY WITH BOYER.

3. BOTH KOROMA AND KING BREATHED VISIBLE SIGHS OF RELIEF AND KOROMA SAID THE FIRING OF THE TWO MEN AND DISBANDING THE

BOARD HAD BEEN THE FIRST ITEMS ON THEIR AGENDA. KOROMA CAUTIONED THAT HE COULD MAKE NO DECISIONS ON OICI AND THAT EVERYTHING WE DISCUSSED WOULD BE REFERRED DIRECTLY TO THE PRESIDENT. WE NEXT DISCUSSED THE COMPOSITION OF A NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND EVENTUALLY AGREED THAT THE MINISTER SHOULD APPOINT SIX MEMBERS AND OICI SHOULD APPOINT SIX MEMBERS. THE MINISTER ALSO AGREED THAT A KNOWLEDGEABLE STAFF MEMBER SHOULD BE APPOINTED AN EX OFFICIO MEMBER OF THE BOARD.

4. THE MINISTER ASKED ME TO EXPLAIN THE USG'S RELATION TO OICI. I SAID USAID HAD PROVIDED A DOLS1.8 MILLION GRANT TO OIC-PHILADELPHIA OVER A FIVE YEAR PERIOD FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OICI IN SIERRA LEONE AND THAT OICI WAS EXPECTED TO OPERATE AS A PRIVATE VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATION SIMILAR TO CARE AND CRS. THE MINISTER THEN ASKED BOYER TO EXPLAIN THE PHASING AND AMOUNTS OF EXPECTED GOSL CONTRIBUTION TO OICI. THE QUESTION OF SALARY STRUCTURE WAS RAISED NEXT. BOYER SAID THE MINISTRY EARLIER HAD APPROVED OICI'S SALARY STRUCTURE, UNFORTUNATELY NOT IN WRITING. BOYER EXPLAINED THAT HIS SALARY STRUCTURE WAS HIGHER THAN GOVERNMENT'S BECAUSE OICI STAFF HAD LESS VACATION, WORKED LONGER HOURS, WAS NOT PENSIONABLE, AND MADE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE OICI DEVELOPMENT FUND. FURTHER DISCUSSION ON THIS SUBJECT WAS DEFERRED TO TUESDAY, JULY 12, TO PERMIT BOYER AND HIS ACCOUNTANT AND THE MINISTRY'S COMPENSATION STAFF TO REVIEW THE WAGE SCALES.

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FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
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INFO AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 FREETOWN 2130

SECSTATE ALSO FOR AID

MONROVIA ALSO FOR AID

5. THE MINISTER NEXT QUESTIONED BOYER CLOSELY ON WHY BO HAD BEEN CHOSEN FOR THE SITE OF OICI ACTIVITIES. BOYER EXPLAINED

THAT IT WAS SELECTED BECAUSE THE GOSL FIVE YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN CALLED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS IN ALL PROVINCES AND THE SOUTHERN PROVINCE WAS THE ONLY ONE THAT DID NOT HAVE SUCH A SCHOOL AND BECAUSE THE AREA PROVIDED ACCESS TO THE RURAL POPULATION AND STILL WAS CLOSE TO SEVERAL LARGE INDUSTRIES. KOROMA NEXT ASKED WHO IN GOVERNMENT HAD APPROVED THE LOCATION OF BO. NEITHER KING, BOYER, NOR MYSELF COULD RECALL ANY INDIVIDUAL SPECIFICALLY APPROVING BO BUT WE AGREED THAT FORMER MINISTER OF EDUCATION SANDY, FORMER LABOR MINISTER GOBIO-LAMIN, THE PRIME MINISTER, AND EVEN THE PRESIDENT WERE AWARE THAT BO WAS THE CHOICE OF OICI AND NO ONE HAD OBJECTED.

6. KOROMA THEN ASKED BOYER FOR A FUNDOWN ON THE STATUS OF OICI'S ACTIVITIES ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA. BOYER SAID OICI HAD A SUCCESSFUL ON-GOING PROGRAM IN GHANA, WAS STILL RUNNING A REDUCED PROGRAM IN ETHIOPIA, WAS STARTING UP IN TOGO AND ZAMBIA, AND WAS NEGOTIATING A PROGRAM IN LESOTHO. THE MINISTER ASKED WHY OICI HAD TERMINATED IN KENYA. BOYER EXPLAINED

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THAT OICI-KENYA HAD BECOME OVERLY IDENTIFIED WITH TOM MBOYA AND HIS TRIBE AND THAT WITH MBOYA'S DEATH OICI FOUND IT NO LONGER HAD SUPPORT IN GOVERNMENT. BOYER AND I VOLUNTEERED TO ANSWER ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS THE MINISTER MIGHT HAVE AND IF WE DID NOT HAVE THE ANSWERS TO SEEK THEM.

7. EMBASSY COMMENT: KOROMA APPEARED FULLY SATISFIED WITH THE DISCUSSIONS AND PERSONALLY SYMPATHETIC AND ANXIOUS TO OVERCOME OICI'S DIFFICULTIES, BUT AS HE NOTED THAT FINAL DECISION RESTS WITH STEVENS. FROM THE QUESTIONS ASKED IT APPEARS SOMEONE WITH ACCESS TO A BROAD VIEW OF OICI'S ACTIVITIES ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA MAY BE FEEDING SUSPICIONS AND ALLEGATIONS TO STEVENS, AND HIS EFFORTS HAVE BEEN AIDED BY OICI'S POLITICAL MALADROITNESS. STEVENS APPARENTLY IS NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT THESE ALLEGATIONS OFFHAND, OTHERWISE HE WOULD NOT HAVE CONVOKED BOYER AND MYSELF FRIDAY, BUT CLEARLY THIS WAS A FINAL WARNING. IF OICI SURVIVES THIS EPISODE IT WILL HAVE TO EXERCISE BETTER POLITICAL JUDGEMENT THAN IT HAS SHOWN SO FAR. WILL ADVISE FURTHER WHEN THE PRESIDENT CONVENES THE SECOND MEETING. END EMBASSY COMMENT.

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